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ABSTRACT

School Self Renewal, rooted in the ideas of Organizational Development, is a process of school improvement undertaken with the participation of the members of the school community. Based on reports of Renewal projects in New York City Public High Schools, this paper presents some of Renewal's problem areas, strengths, and the implications of the assessment findings for the future of the Renewal process in schools. Some of the issues addressed include: definitions of School Self Renewal; goals of Renewal in schools; reasons why individuals participate in Renewal activity; and costs and/or disadvantages for those who participate. In examining changes in school life that are to be the products of Renewal activity, this report points out certain developmental patterns which seem to indicate the flow or growth of Renewal activity in a school. The area of evaluation is described as one flaw in the execution of Renewal projects, although otherwise, it is concluded, Renewal works well. (Author/EP)

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# SCHOOL SELF-RENEWAL

# ASSESSMENT SUMMARY REPORT

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# Introduction

In the Fall of 1977 I was asked by representatives of the School Self-Renewal project to conduct an assessment of their activities in the public high schools of New York City. At that time I had heard of the Renewal project but actually knew very little about it. In the year that followed the start of the assessment I received an education that I now value most highly. I have come to know Renewal in ways that few "outsiders" have experienced. I have developed an appreciation for the many significant successes of the project and a respect for the problems that I believe it now confronts.

During the assessment, I supervised the activities of six "assessment consultants" who worked collecting data in the schools. At the conclusion of the assessment these consultants together wrote a report for the Renewal team that is over five hundred pages in length. A report of such length and detail serves the needs and interests of a small group of those who are engaged in the management of the Renewal process in the schools.

After the Renewal Assessment Final Report was presented to the Renewal staff it became clear that another document was needed. We sought a brief report that could be made widely available, and that would convey to the reader the ideas of Renewal and the basic findings of the larger assessment report. I hope that the discussion which follows will meet these needs.

School Self-Renewal

In one of its publications, the Renewal staff describes Renewal as "a specific seven stage process that allows those most directly involved in schools to take positive action to improve the function of their own educational systems." The brochure from which this description comes then explains each of the seven steps, or stages, of the process. They are called entry, diagnosis, planning, research and development, implementation, evaluation, and institutionalization. I suggest that the names of these steps are likely to seem somewhat unusual to many readers for they are rooted in a tradition that is only now becoming familiar to educators and others concerned with education. The tradition or discipline upon which Renewal is based in its theory is called Organization Development or, more simply, OD. OD is a branch of the behavioral sciences which grew from such areas of scholarly endeavor as social psychology and sociology. Today, many major universities have departments which specialize in Organization Development (though the field might be called by such names as organization studies, or organization behavior).

Because the process of Renewal is so firmly rooted in the ideas of OD it is necessary to understand some of the basic principles of OD in order to fully appreciate Renewal and its impact on the schools I believe that an understanding of the discipline of Organization Development can be generated through an exploration of three of its very basic principles. I have called these: individual worth, action research, and process orientation. Each of these principles can be identified with one key thinker in the field.

By the notion of individual worth I mean the belief that the psychology of the individual must be considered if we are to run any organization satisfactorily. People all have needs and consistent failure to meet these needs may cause people to respond in ways that are not to the advantage of the organization of which they are a part. Perhaps the best representative of thought about this aspect of OD's underlying principles is Douglas MacGreggor. He suggested that there are two very broad ways in which people might view the human beings that work in organizations. He called these "Theory X" and "Theory Y." Theory X guides the thinking of a person who believes that others working with, or for him are in many ways inferior. They are seen as lazy, not particularly creative, incapable of motivating themselves for any significant period of time, and therefore requiring strict supervision if they are to do any form of valuable work. In marked contrast to this system of beliefs is that which is called Theory Y. A Theory Y thinker believes that people are generally energetic, highly creative, well motivated, and therefore merely requiring a supportive environment in order to do work of the highest quality. It is tempting, I suppose, to discuss the relative merits of these two "theories" and, in fact, we find many people doing just that. Clearly though, something is wrong with such a discussion for we can each generate examples which seem to support or refute each of these "theoretical" positions. It would seem that we can do this with such ease that the two positions crumble before our eyes as theories with any productive use at all. It does present an apparent paradox. Is it not odd that MacGreggor would present as theory such logically weak positions? The resolution may, by now, be obvious. For despite his use of the label, MacGreggor presented these two positions not as theories at all but rather as

examples of the ways in which our systems of thought (theories, in his terms) govern our behaviors as we relate to others in organizations.

An example may be helpful. Suppose that two people each see the same glass sitting on a table. One sees the glass as half full while the other perceives the glass to be half empty. It makes little sense to concern ourselves with a discussion of which of their two "theories" is closer to correct. The important notion (and the one intended by MacGreggor) is that each of the two people looking at the glass is likely to engage in different behavior. One might drink from the glass while the other might wait, or even fill it further.

Of course, if the "objects" of our perception are people, the situation becomes much more complicated. This is because other people react to our behaviors. Also problematic is the fact that they may react in ways that are so subtle that we (and even they) may remain unaware of their reactions and their implications for the future of our relationship. Building upon the ideas in MacGreggor's works, OD practitioners have come to see how very important perceptions of others (and, of course, self perceptions) are to the successful development of organizations. In order to work productively and creatively, people must perceive their own worth and the worth of others. They must respect their own contributions and the contributions of others to the success of the organization's activity. In sum, there must be a climate which places a high value on the worth of human beings and fosters behavior which allows people to feel that they are worthy. Taken together, these ideas represent the basic principle of OD which I have called individual worth.

The notion of action research is somewhat more easily explained. This is a tradition of applied science that is best represented by the work of the social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Lewin believed firmly that science could be of greatest value only if it were applied to the real problems of the world. As we consider this notion we must remember that for Lewin, "science" was not merely a collection of facts about the world. Rather, science is an approach that one might take in attempting to understand these facts. Science is the method that generates facts so that they might be fully trusted. Lewin was fond of saying that "there is nothing so practical as a good theory." He realized that theory guides all of our thought about the world. These theories can only be tested and improved if we are able to articulate them.

The Lewinian notion of action research implies that we can best understand the problems of the world if we approach them in a spirit that is very much like that of scientific inquiry. He suggested that we start by articulating our "theory." This might, in fact, be a very simple statement which captures the essence of our understanding of a particular problem situation. Next, our theory, or understanding leads us to suggest some solution to the problem (in OD terminology usually called an "intervention"). Because our intervention was guided by explicit theory, its success or failure helps us to refine our theory while we attempt to solve the problem that we confront. This process continues to spiral in this way for to the degree that we succeed in refining our theory we will succeed in generating interventions which are likely to help us to solve the problem of concern. When correctly applied, this idea of action research makes the process of organizational growth and change much more rational than it otherwise might be. People

working in organizations often can learn to generate theories that are remarkable for their sophistication and these, in turn, can help them to generate solutions to organizational problems which otherwise might have eluded them.

The third, and in some ways most important, basic principle of Organization Development is that which I have called process orientation. This idea may be best understood in contrast to another, more common, orientation toward organizational life which is called content, or product orientation. In the extreme, a content or product orientation means that in all cases, "the ends justify the means." In an organization with a bias toward content or product people are concerned only with the measurable results in terms of work product.

The orientation of the practice of OD emphasizes the work process. The OD practitioner knows that it is important to know how people work together. Of course, the OD practitioner listens to what is said (this is the content) as people work but he, or she, is even more interested in how it is said, or to whom it is said, for these are indicators of the quality of the work process. Work process issues first became an important topic of study about thirty years ago when researchers were studying the problem solving styles of groups. These researchers soon discovered that there were sometimes dramatic misperceptions held by people who had seen, or had participated in, a particular incident in the group. Clearly, such distortions in the work process could have significant implications for the quality of the work product. The person who is today most widely known as an exponent of the belief that it is important to understand work process is Edgar Schein. Schein believes that most organizations can be helped to function more product-

ively if they are assisted by an outsider who advises them only on matters of work process. Schein's view may now seem familiar but was, in fact, rather radical when first proposed. Today, there are many organizations which rely heavily upon the consultative assistance of experts in the field of work process. Such process consultation is fundamental to all Organization Development work and is the basis of the OD process which is called School Self-Renewal.

With this information available to us we can explore with greater understanding the seven stages of the Renewal OD model:

Entry is the name given to the psychological process of starting any new working relationship. This represents the earliest or "start-up" phase of the Renewal effort in a given school. Typically, Renewal schools are nominated by the Borough superintendent. Ideally, the principal of the school and the key staff members meet with the Renewal consultant to explore the variety of ways that they might work together. If it seems to all concerned that the Renewal process should be adopted, these people commit themselves to a more formal educational experience. They will learn more about the workings of Renewal by attending workshops and colloquia. The entry phase is considered complete when the group has generated a written "design", or outline, of the work activities that they intend to carry out.

Diagnosis is described by Renewal brochures as "a systematic process for identification of problems" within the school. Renewal seeks the widest possible forum of participation in this important process. The goal of the greatest possible involvement of the various factions of the school community serves two very important functions. First, it facilitates an understanding of the breadth of the school's problems. Second (though equally important) is the notion that wide representation

at this early stage of Renewal activity will make support for later Renewal activities more readily available.

Planning is the systematic application of the results of the diagnostic stage to the process of generating objectives. During the planning phase people articulate their objectives in measurable, behavioral form where possible; they identify their resources for action; they generate alternative plans for action; and finally select from among these the course that seems to be the most appropriate.

Research and Development is primarily a data collection phase. This activity is based upon the action research notions discussed above. Clearly, the more trustworthy the information available about a particular aspect of school life, the more likely it is that ways can be generated to change and improve it. The development of specific programs of approach to the school's problems is built upon the research that has been done. In some important ways the research and development phase is less discrete that are the other phases of the Renewal model. During other phases of the model it is likely that research and development will be repeated frequently.

Implementation is the phase in which the programs and processes that have already been developed are put into action. It is extremely important that the people involved at the implementation phase each understand their roles and their responsibilities to the others involved. The sorts of activities and projects which have resulted from Renewal implementation in schools are extremely varied and will be discussed in detail later.

Evaluation is the process by which the actions taken at the implementation phase are assessed and modified. Once again, we see that this phase is built directly upon the ideas of action research.

Frequently when working in this phase we see a return to earlier phases so that new information might be collected and new plans implemented. These are typically modifications of the original plans rather than completely new constructions. This again a result of the action research idea that changes will best be developed through a process of successive approximation and modification rather than through a process which dictates a new beginning each time a project is less than totally successful.

Institutionalization implies that the process of Renewal has become a well internalized aspect of school life for significant numbers of those involved in the activities of a school. At this point, the processes borne of the Renewal stages would be executed in ways that were not self-conscious but rather seemed a natural part of school life. To achieve total institutionalization the Renewal process would have to pervade all substructures of the school.

Though the steps outlined above are those defined by Renewal, they are almost precisely what we might find were we to explore the process of Organization Development in settings other than schools. If, for example, we were to consider the course of an OD intervention in an industrial corporation we might fine exactly these phases. It is important to realize though, that while the steps may look the same "on paper" the situations are different in many significant ways. Typically, in industrial settings, the lines of decision making authority are such that the support of one key individual may be all that is initially required for an OD intervention to begin. If, to continue our example, the president of a manufacturing corporation felt that an OD approach was best suited to a problem that he, or she, found in the organization it is likely that the necessary resources would quickly be brought to

bear. If the organization's president felt that several senior managers should attend an educational workshop together at which they would explore aspects of their work process, the plans would be hastily made. There would be little question but that the president of the organization could allocate the time of his, or her, subordinates for such a purpose. If, in the extreme case, all work back at the "assembly line" had to be stopped, this too could be arranged. This example is not to deny that there are problems in implementing OD plans in industrial settings. Rather, I present the examples to highlight the vastly more complex problems and constraints that confront the OD consultant when working in the typical public school setting.

In the schools, authority lines are substantially more complex than those that we typically find in industry. There are a much wider variety of constraints upon the activities of any individual in the schools. The day is divided into short time segments which, though perhaps well suited to classroom activity, are inappropriate to the sorts of education that OD implies. And most important of all the school's "assembly line" cannot be stopped while those who run the school explore aspects of their organizational life. In marked contrast to an industrial organization, the activities of a school cannot be halted, even temporarily, to allow for the introspection that is typically required if OD as ordinarily applied is to be effective.

We see then that School Self-Renewal presents itself in ways that appear almost identical to those that might describe the Organization Development efforts that have been so widespread in industrial organizations. We have also briefly considered some of the ways that the settings in which Renewal operates are different from those found in industry. The important question which now emerges is this: How well

is School Self-Renewal doing the job that it has set for itself? Is it, in fact, bringing the demonstrably successful techniques of OD to the new context of the public high schools?

## The Renewal Assessment

It was in an attempt to answer these questions that the Renewal assessment was undertaken in the Fall of 1976. After discussions with representatives of the Renewal project, I was hired to conduct the assessment. I hired to assist me in this activity six advanced graduate students. Five of these people were studying at the Ph.D. level in social psychology while one was studying at the masters level in a school of social welfare. All had an interest in more fully understanding processes of social change and also had an appreciation for the difficulties of collecting data in the field as well as in laboratory settings.

Through extended discussions with the six "assessment consultants" and representatives of the Renewal project the assessment was designed. We decided to collect data in twelve of the schools active in Renewal. Also, we decided that data of two different types would be sought. We sought information about the thoughts and understanding those in the schools had about Renewal and also sought information about the activities of Renewal themselves. Because some of the data were of a cognitive nature they could easily and accurately be collected with a questionnaire that was designed for the purpose. Other data required that the assessment consultants observe the activities of Renewal, study the products of Renewal such as proposals or the printed material of new curricula, and interview those active in the Renewal projects in some depth.

The data collection phase of the assessment lasted for approximately six months with the assessment consultants visiting the schools in which they were to collect data approximately once per week. At the end of the data collection phase each of the assessment consultants wrote a final report on the schools that they assessed. The data from the reports were presented, or "fed back",to the people in the schools who contributed data to the assessment. The reports themselves have been given to the Renewal consultant team. Taken together, the reports total over five hundred pages.

The amount of information included in the reports is vast. Even so, we must remember that the reports themselves are summaries. At every step in the writing of the reports, the assessment consultants confronted the problem of selection from the wealth of data that they had available. The problem is a complex one because of the process orientation of OD practice. Even issues which appear to be of little significance may, at some point, reveal themselves to be of great importance to the process of Renewal in a school.

In formulating this summary report I confront the problem of selection once again. A careful reading of the reports on these twelve assessment schools reveals that while their Renewal efforts have many important things in common, they also have developed what might be called distinct "personalities." It is because of this differentiation that the task of selection of material is so difficult. I have decided that the most useful approach is that of selection of themes, or issues, that are common to the twelve schools. It would seem that these common themes would say something fundamental about the current state of Renewal in these schools.

In the material which follows I will present some of Renewal's

problem areas, some of its strengths, and some of the implications of these assessment findings for the future of the Renewal process in our schools.

Let us start with an area that is, in many ways, among the most basic. Participants in the assessment were asked on two occasions (once in the questionnaire and once in an interview) to define Renewal as it existed in their school. The question is important because it allows us to see if the basic ideas of Renewal are being adequately transmitted to the key people who participate in the process.

The first group of responses conforms rather well to the notions intended by the Renewal project staff. These comments, made by teachers and administrators in the schools, might have been written by representatives of the Renewal project. They described Renewal as:

> "an ongoing process which examines the problems in the school and attempts to solve them"
>
> "an ongoing process that attempts to initiate change"
>
> "a way to renew vitality"
>
> "a process for promoting changes that have long been needed"

We see in each of these the general process orientation theme that is basic to Renewal together with the ideas of increased vitality in problem solving.

In contrast to these though, we also see some responses that paint a rather different picture of Renewal as"

> "solely a funding source"
>
> "a group of people who screen proposals... and decide whether or not they should be funded"

"primarily a funding source for projects"

"money and released time"

Given our discussion thus far it might well seem odd that these "definitions" arise at all. They certainly do not seem at all similar to the process of school change that is intended. Where then did these ideas come from? The answer can be found in an exploration of the history of the Renewal project. Renewal was, in fact, founded in a time of rather rich support, from public sector and private grants, for the sort of activities that became School Self-Renewal. During that period many did, in fact, (and with some reason) come to see Renewal as the source for much needed funding for innovative projects. Only after this period did Renewal develop into the OD process that it is today. We see in the comments quoted above that for some the old image remains and is, even today, a rather serious problem in schools which have been associated with the Renewal process long enough to remember the days when money was so much more readily available.

A third category of definition of Renewal seems to completely ignore the process aspects that are intended and instead tends to see Renewal as the results of the process. In these definitions, Renewal is described as its specific projects such as:

"a three year sequence in the performing arts"

"a way of introducing new courses"

the "ability to update the curriculum"

Here, once again we see a potential problem. These statements indicate

that for people who responded in this way, Renewal has a rather specific, almost factionalized meaning. Renewal for these people seems not to imply any form of school wide change process. Rather, it seems to imply merely the opportunity to explore areas for change in the school that are of particular interest to the individual.

We see then that there are three broad categories into which we might place the definitions of Renewal that we found in the schools that were assessed: For some Renewal is seen as the intended process for creative change; for others, Renewal is little more than a source for the needed funding; and for the third group, Renewal means only the specific projects that are of personal interest.

It is interesting to note that while there is such diversity in the definitions of Renewal that we received, there is substantial uniformity in the beliefs held about the goals of Renewal in the schools. When asked to select from among fifteen possible goals for Renewal activity in the schools respondents indicated with substantial agreement that:

> generating teacher creativity,
> involving students,
> bringing in outside resources,
> involving teachers in planning,
> and making communication more open,

were the basic goals of the Renewal process. The diverse definitions discussed above and these uniformly perceoved goals create a somewhat unusual situation: People in the schools seem unable to articulate just what Renewal is but they seem to understand rather well where it is heading.

The assessment team sought the reasons that individuals participate in Renewal activity. Some give reasons directly related to the good of the school such as:

"improvements in school image"
"improve general atmosphere"
"keep the school vital"
"improve the education"

Others who responded offered motivations which related more to personal influence or impact such as:

"it gives teachers... a say in school policy"
"to be involved in decision making"
"belief in shared leadership"

A third category of motivation is represented by this comment:

"to make sure that they, or their department get a piece of the money"

Of course, in any situation as complex as that of Renewal in a school there are likely to be costs or disadvantages for those who participate. When respondents were asked about these they most frequently mentioned the excessive expenditure of time. The implication here was that their other important responsibilities suffered. This was a problem that was very widely discussed in every school that was assessed. (It is interesting to note that while expenditure of time was presented as a

very significant problem for those participating in Renewal the assessment consultants found that in eleven of twelve schools participating in the assessment people gave rather freely to support the progress of the assessment. It is possible that their behavior is a better indication of their true feelings than are their responses to our questionnaire item.)

The next most frequent cost of participation in Renewal activity that was mentioned was related to disappointment over project termination. Such termination was usually caused by budget cuts.

Closely related to the budget issue is that which I have called "relative deprivation." We see many comments like these:

> "now they are asking us to do something for nothing and I think that's grossly unfair"
>
> "it feels like they [Renewal] have pulled the rug out from under us"

Clearly, there is some anger conveyed in these statements. I believe that they are best understood as indicating the pain that we all experience on losing something that we have come to depend upon. Those people who are now about to embark on the Renewal process without external funding are likely to find it easier than did those who had the funds, learned to use them productively, and then suffered their loss.

Another category of costs or concern about participation in Renewal activity reveals itself in these comments:

> "people rebelled against being excluded"
>
> it "intensified division within the school"
>
> "I barely speak to anyone outside Renewal"

> "we didn't get as much cooperation from the [rest of] the faculty as we would have liked"

Clearly, in most of these schools there is a boundary defined by participation in Renewal activity. Another questionnaire item responded to this issue by asking respondents if they believed that more people in the school should be involved in Renewal activity. In every school assessed, the strong belief was that many more people should become involved.

We see then that while there is no one widely held definition of Renewal in these schools, those definitions that we do find fit into three broad categories: Renewal as OD process, Renewal as funding source, and Renewal as specific school change. Common goals for the endeavor are widely held and their are certain widely held perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages of participation in Renewal activity.

What then are the changes in school life that are to be the products of Renewal activity? Are there any changes of real significance? The answer is a resounding yes for in all of the assessment schools that have participated in the Renewal process for any substantial period of time the list of Renewal projects is both extensive and impressive. On careful observation of these schools we can discover certain developmental patterns which seem to indicate the flow or growth of Renewal activities in a school.

If we look first to those things which happen in schools in which Renewal is relatively new we see that in each case there was some critical event which served to focus the change energy within the school. The notion of a critical event is important to the entry phase of Renewal and should not be confused with the idea of crisis. In fact, the critical event might not be a crisis at all. Ideally, the critical event is an

issue, or topic, which concerns a sufficient number of people in the school that it seems worthy of their continued attention and effort. One somewhat paradoxical element of the critical event from the perspective of the Renewal consultant is that an issue is sought which is of real significance yet, at the same time, has substantial likelihood for success as a focus of Renewal effort. The Renewal consultants know that an early failure could decrease the desire of members of the school community to actively participate in the task of Renewal.

Let us look at some of the critical events which frequently occur. One very common area for very early Renewal activity is that of communications within the school community. Most frequently, we see that there is the perception of poor communication between members of the faculty and members of the school's administration. Often, the Renewal consultants have been successful in this area by making "structural", or procedural, changes in the communication process. They might, for example, suggest alterations in what had become the accepted manner for the operation of faculty meetings. Such procedural changes are of great significance because they depend for their success upon things beyond the skills, or commitment, of any individual or group. Rather, they have a power of their own to alter, and hopefully improve, the quality of communication within the school. The general area of improved communication was a critical event in many of the schools assessed.

Another common area for early Renewal activity is in the realm of improved school security. These are inner city schools which frequently have significant security problems. In many of the schools that participated in the assessment we were told that due to the activities of the Renewal consultant together with concerned members of the school community, security had been dramatically improved; and these improvements were made without having to resort to a siege mentality within

the school.

Often, at the entry phase, the Renewal consultant is sought as a catalyst for change in such administrative procedures as the programming of the students. In several schools we were told that new techniques which significantly improved the administration of this complex process were instituted shortly after the start of Renewal in the school and were seen as a major symbol of Renewal's early success.

One issue that is of concern to virtually every member of a high school community is that of orientation of the new students that arrive every year. In many schools, an exploration of possible orientation strategies is one of the first areas to be examined by Renewal. This last is an interesting example of a "critical event" that is typically something other than a crisis. The problem of orientation of new students is, in fact, something of a routine matter. Yet, in many schools it seems to be an ideal catalyzing issue. Perhaps this is because it is a problem area which is perceived as such by nearly everyone involved in the life of the school while not being an area in which individuals are likely to be made uncomfortable by the prospect of change.

We see then that there are a variety of early activities which form that which we have called the critical event. This early activity has two major purposes. In the short term it serves to work toward the solution of some real school problem. The importance of these early successes cannot be ignored for they serve to support the second, and more important, purpose. Through the activity of work on the critical event a group of concerned members of the school community coalesces. These are the prople who ultimately will become the "core group" of those who really create Renewal in the schools. The Renewal process really does not constrain the methods by which this very import-

ant group should be formed. Generally though, a representative group is sought. These people are to be representative in a psychological rather than the more traditional political sense. They are people who others trust to represent them. It is possible, for example, that no student would be a member of this group, though the core group can be most successful when there are members of the group who are sufficiently well trusted by the students as to generate the feelings of representation and support.

Once the core group starts to function fully we once again see certain trends in the types of projects that are undertaken. While these are not strictly in order of chronology there is enough commonality to the development of Renewal in these schools to allow us to consider the process as growing in stages.

In schools that are relatively new to the Renewal process we usually find work by the core group on a variety of highly specific problems. Sometimes, these problems have school wide implications, but more typically we see teachers and administrators working on issues that are most likely to affect their own work life. In one school that we assessed, several in the core group felt strongly that there were significant communication problems between members of the faculty and members of the custodial staff. While I suppose that it could be argued that the Renewal process merely energized these teachers to work on a problem that they might well have solved without Renewal I also believe that many of the principles of organizational work process taught by Renewal made it possible for the teachers to develop a much more productive working relationship with the custodial staff. The core group had learned from Renewal that poor working relationships could, in fact, be improved through creative effort.

In another school the communication problems were seen to be of

a somewhat more general nature. There, a core group was formed (called the Renewal Committee) which included representatives of the various factions of the school community. The committee has been structured with faculty members, administrators, students and parents of children attending the school. Clearly, if such a group did little other than meeting to share their interests and concerns, communication would be likely to improve. This improvement in communication is further enhanced by the fact that this diverse group actually runs the Renewal activities in the school. Though they started as separate factions they have become an interdependent team.

A school that is rather new to the Renewal process has developed an approach that is rather different from those that we have seen thus far. In that school, the principal felt that a variety of decisions that should be made by others were being inappropriately thrust upon her. She tried to encourage members of her cabinet to take a more active decision making role but achieved little success. Eventually, she became intrigued with the Organization Development principles of Renewal. She established an agreement, or "contract", with a Renewal consultant which focused upon the decision making issues within her cabinet. In this school, Renewal might best be seen as an educational endeavor which has the school's "top management" as its focus. Were we to see such a process in a more traditional OD setting we might call it a "management development" or "team building" effort. The important point is that while this sort of Renewal activity seems rather different from other types that we have explored, the process that generated it was virtually the same as in other schools.

In many of the schools, the next stage of Renewal development seems to support activities of a "special event" nature. We see tournaments, dances, cleanup campaigns, and other one-time school projects.

These seem almost the ideal way to allow the newly forming Renewal process to try its wings. Typically, these are activities which, by their very nature, are likely to meet with very significant emotional support. This, frequently, is followed by the behavioral support that is needed to make Renewal work.

In virtually all Renewal schools attention turns to curriculum issues after the Renewal process seems reasonably secure. The curriculum modifications are incredibly varied and impact upon every aspect of school life. It is here that we see the major impact of Renewal on the educational lives of the children who attend these schools. In the schools assessed there were substantive modifications in reading, mathematics, language, science, English, biology, chemistry, and other courses. It may not be accurate to describe these merely as changes in the curriculum for in addition to changing the material studied, we often see that Renewal has had a productive impact upon the learning process. In many cases the notions of organizational process that were planted in the school by the Renewal consultant eventually find their way into the classroom and are experienced by the students.

Typically, the kinds of curriculum revision that we have discussed here are met with substantial support in the schools. These are, after all, the sorts of things that teachers and administrators "should" be doing. By this I mean that in making even substantial modifications of the curricula no role expectations are likely to be violated, few power issues or concerns over vested interest are likely to be uncovered. In short, such changes in school life are not likely to be seen as politically threatening by any population in the school. Such changes to not "rock the boat."

Generally, as the Renewal process grows from this relatively benign pattern of school change we see a variety of interventions which might

be characterized as changes in administrative procedures. There have been changes in report cards and course evaluation forms in many schools. In others, we have seen changes in the attendance procedures. There are many Renewal schools that have adopted new methods for programming. As in the case of the curriculum revisions that I discussed above, these are all changes of significance which are likely to be easily implemented for, as before, these are the sorts of activities which are seen by most people in the schools as appropriate. In reality, it is not their appropriateness that makes them acceptable. Rather, it is the fact that they are not likely to be disruptive to the balance of internal school politics. In several schools the assessment revealed that the creative energy of the Renewal core group seemed directed at the generation of changes which would improve the quality of life in the school while preserving the type of political balance that I have discussed. Though I would not wish to deny that the school initially benefits from such an approach, I believe that it implies an ultimate limitation on school improvement through Renewal. We will explore this more fully below.

In some schools there have been changes that are of a rather different order. These changes are much more significant to the overall thrust of Organization Development. They are the changes that actually alter some significant aspect of organizational structure or process. In one school, a position was created of project funding officer. This individual was to seek, and then oversee the distribution of funds that could be brought to the school through the efforts of Renewal. In another school there is now an individual who has responsibility for the authorship of proposals that seek funding for Renewal projects. In yet another school there is now an ombudsman who seeks to mediate the variety of conflicts that arise in any complex social system.

This idea of real organizational change is perhaps best exemplified by the school which saw the need for the development of a mini-school within its walls. At that mini-school youngsters who were substantially retarded in both mathematics and reading are now showing more significant growth than children who are in other sections of the school. One key here seems to be the fact that only those youngsters with good attendance records were allowed to attend the mini-school. Their dedication to attending school even in the face of their retarded rates of learning indicated that they were well motivated to learn if the appropriate climate could be created for them. The great success of this major Renewal effort has shown this to be true.

As is now obvious, the projects, large and small that have grown from Renewal in these schools are incredibly diverse. In part because of this great diversity the assessment team became interested in the intent of these many projects. We asked in a questionnaire if respondents believed that projects were intended to serve the needs of students, teachers, or administrators. Most frequently we were told that projects were designed to serve the needs of students. Occasionally teachers' needs were served and rarely, if ever, were the needs of the schools' administrators seen as a primary focus of Renewal projects.

In addition, we asked if work on Renewal activity somehow diverted people from attending to the "real problems" of the school. The most frequent answer was that the work of Renewal directly responded to the real problems of the school.

A notable flaw in the execution of Renewal projects in virtually every school that was assessed was in the area of project evaluation. These comments are representative:

"that's a failing, no evaluation"

"implementation phase was hard to measure"

"evaluation... only occurred when project people came back for more funds"

"projects are 'successful' if they engage the enthusiasm of the majority"

"none of the proposals I saw asked for evaluation time"

Given the general lack of systematic evaluation, I at first felt that it was remarkable that most Renewal participants believe that the process of distribution of Renewal resources is a fair one. Then, I realized that virtually all of the people responding to the assessment questions had proposed, and had succeeded in having adopted, at least one Renewal project. Taken together, these facts make more sense. By rotating the opportunities for execution of Renewal projects among the members of the core group evaluation becomes less salient. Also, as long as there is the norm of no evaluation the rotation of Renewal opportunities seems a good way to avoid conflict. Unfortunately, this system makes sense only if we assume that all projects proposed are likely to be equally beneficial to the school. This would, of course, seem unreasonable, but it represents the idea that is tacitly supported by the rotation of project opportunities in the absence of rigorous evaluation.

Clearly, such an informal system of distribution of Renewal opportunities could only survive if the numbers of people involved were rather small. This is exactly the situation that we find in each of the schools assessed. In each school questionnaires were to be distributed to each of the people "actively involved" in the Renewal process. To define this group, we sought the assistance of the Renewal consultants. We then contacted each of the people named by the consultants and asked them, once again, to name those people actively involved. We assumed

that there would be several active people not known to the consultants but this assumption proved to be false. In each of the schools assessed the list of people active in Renewal generated by the consultants was virtually identical to the list generated by those people working in the school. This does say something positive about the awareness of the consultants but it is the result of this double selection process which is more important here. Despite two opportunities for inclusion we found that in each school the number of people active in Renewal is extremely small. In the schools assessed there is an average of about twelve active Renewal participants. With these small numbers certain key roles will become even more significant than they might otherwise be. Let us now look at two of these.

The principal in a Renewal school is, by design, a key figure in the process. A review of the reports reveals however that principals in several of these schools are seen as having taken a rather negative role. These comments express the problem:

> "at times he's doing a whole lot; at other times he doesn't give a damn"
>
> "failure to motivate those on the cabinet designated to carry out the plans"
>
> "there was no discussion, the principal wanted it [Renewal]"

Unfortunately, we find only a few comments that are supportive of the principals' chosen role in Renewal"

> "she's been helpful; given support to it; hasn't tried to dominate it"
>
> "I think she's been a strong motivating force"

Interestingly, respondents told us almost unanimously that they did not believe that "Renewal was a 'rubber stamp' for the principal." Typically, the problem is that the principal is seen as failing to provide sufficient support to insure the implementation of Renewal projects and plans. Generally, the views held by the teachers and administrators about the principal's role in Renewal are well represented by this comment made by a teacher:

> "it's o.k. if you are interested in what he's interested in"

Happily, another key figure is viewed in a much more positive light. When respondents were asked to rate their school's Renewal consultant on a wide variety of dimensions they offered little but praise. The consultants' activity is seen as most helpful. We must note though that in every school we were told that the consultants were not available frequently enough. These people have truly become scarce resources for the Renewal schools.

## Issues Confronting Renewal

The Renewal assessment can indeed be faulted in that it collected data only from those people who are actively engaged in Renewal activity. Despite the fact that our respondents are supportive of Renewal a wide variety of issues do emerge that are worthy of concern. Let us consider some of these.

In schools that have participated in Renewal for several years there is the lingering perception that Renewal is the source for the money that is needed to support many of the creative activities in the

schools. While I believe that this is a problem of real significance it is also one that will probably be solved by virtue of the passage of time alone. With each person who becomes involved in Renewal in its present form the magnitude of the problem decreases. There is, however, an important lesson to be learned from the bitterness generated by the "relative deprivation" that some of the people in the schools have experienced. I would suggest that if the day should come when funding is once again available through Renewal some steps should be taken to avoid these problems. One possibility is that of encouraging people in the schools to develop the skills necessary to generate their own sources of outside funding. A policy of Renewal "matching funds" might allow the schools to more easily make the transition to the leaner times that seem always to follow times of plenty in education.

A problem area that is more basic to the Renewal process as it now functions is that of the role relationships within the school. On several occasions the assessment revealed that people were being asked to behave in ways that were incompatible with the more fundamental expectations of their behavior generated by their work responsibilities. We see this situation when we observe the students who sit on some of the Renewal core group committees. In that context they are expected to honestly represent the views and values of the students in the school. I suggest that this is not possible for them to do. The norms that constrain the lives of students in schools are different from those that support the honest confrontation that we might find at a Renewal meeting. In the experience of the assessment, the students at Renewal meetings cope with this dilemma by remaining silent. The purpose of their presence is not served. In fact, I believe that until a way is found to really make it possible for these students to participate effectively, they should not attend.

Another, and more serious, problem is generated by essentially the same cause as that discussed above. Part of the Renewal model supports the notion that the Renewal process in each school will move from a phase of activity on the part of the Renewal consultant to a phase in which these activities will be taken over by a person internal to the school. This person is the Renewal coordinator and is usually the person who has major responsibility for the management of the core group and its work. At first, this may seem sensible but we must remember that the coordinator is a person who is part of the school's social system. He, or she, is constrained by this system whatever the degree of its organizational health. The primary power of the Renewal consultant is that he, or she, is perceived as objective. The Renewal consultant is not seen as representing any faction or system of beliefs within the school and this is extremely important if the consultant is to be truly effective. When the time comes for decreased participation on the part of the consultant attempts have been made to have the coordinator substitute. In order to prepare the coordinator for this consultative role a variety of high quality training programs have been offered by Renewal. I suggest however that training is not the relevant issue. It is not for lack of training that a coordinator (usually a teacher) would find it difficult to critically evaluate the organizational performance of the school's principal. Again, we see that such behavior is unlikely because it presents too great a violation of the role expectations that already exist within the school.

Broadly speaking we might say that these examples, and others that have appeared elsewhere in this report, have indicated that Renewal is, in many ways, reluctant to attend to the very real power (or "political") issues in the schools. The representatives of the process seem too often, to take the route that ruffles the fewest feathers. In one sense

this is to be commended but such an approach does have some very important disadvantages. Earlier, I mentioned that the limitation of the Renewal process may lie in an overly cautious attitude toward change in the schools. The issue relates to the need to actually test the political balance that exists in every social system. Perhaps the most damaging indictment that could be made of Renewal in a school is that the changes that it created were not significant enough to warrant the continued use of the methods. The process of change has the resistance of some people as a necessary byproduct. This resistance must not become the sole determinant of the course of change in a school. In fact, where ways of doing things have outworn their usefulness we might well find the strongest resistance to meaningful and necessary change.

Related to these concerns is the possibility that in some schools the form rather than the spirit of Renewal has prevailed. For example, in an attempt to help those active in Renewal to work together most productively, the Renewal consultants have taught participants at Renewal meetings to "debrief" their meetings. This simply means that participants are asked to comment at the end of each meeting on their feelings about the work they did together. They are encouraged to examine their work critically so that it might be steadily improved. I suspect that while this may have been an excellent learning device, it has outlived its real use. I believe that it has created a situation in which those working at a meeting hold their concerns until its conclusion (when it is really too late) so that they might then express dissatisfaction with some aspect of the process.

Other issues relate to the image that Renewal has in the eyes of those not directly involved. Discussions with principals have indicated that some were reluctant to become involved in Renewal activity for fear

that it might be seen by others as an indication that their school was in some form of crisis. We have seen that crisis is not required if Renewal is to succeed. I would hope that the Renewal team could work to develop an image such that Renewal schools might see themselves with greater pride. One step in this direction might be to decrease the emphasis placed in the literature of Renewal upon its effectiveness in crisis intervention in schools. Crisis intervention is only one of the areas in which Renewal has revealed its effectiveness.

Finally, an important concern is generated by the numbers of people who are involved in the activities of Renewal. There are all too few. Typically we found a group of dedicated teachers and administrators numbering perhaps ten to fifteen who carry forward the developmental process which is Renewal. Their committment is extraordinary. For many who participated in the assessment Renewal is the creative center of their work life. Were more people to become involved, the process could only be enhanced.

## Conclusion

Only a year ago I knew little about School Self-Renewal. Today, I feel that I know the project well and I support its work without major reservation. To be sure, Renewal confronts some problems; but I believe that those involved have the insight, energy, and skill to ensure the continued development of their approach to improving our schools. If the project continues to adhere to the Organization Development principles that it advocates so well it can only grow, and thereby help the schools even more than it already has.